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RENEWAL OF THE
EAST INDIA COMPANY'S
Charter.

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ON

COLONIAL POLICY.

IN ANSWER TO

A RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

ON THE

EAST INDIA COMPANY'S

CHARTER.

BY AN IMPARTIAL OBSERVER.

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augmentation of her political strength and commercial importance ; provided the connexion remains unimpaired, and an amicable intercourse continues to be carried on. Were it otherwise, the colonial system would only cause embarrassment, and occasion a display of extended territory and multiplied population, without any increase of national energy. Unproductive territorial possessions, and unemployed manufacturers, are dead weights upon society, and must eventually sink the most powerful communities.

The national superiority of states, considered physically, is to be estimated by the number of their inhabitants, and their ability to support an increasing population. The means of employment must consequently be sought for, and, if possible, obtained ; for on this the subsistence of the main body of the people must depend. Now this is chiefly to be found in the extension of the manufacturing principle, which will furnish employment for thousands of those whose labours are not required by the agricultural interest. It is this consideration which renders foreign

possessions so extremely valuable, nay even necessary, to the well-being of states yielding an increase of population. In proportion, therefore, to the extent of their colonies, and in so far as they are made subservient to the population at home, have nations acquired additional strength and consequence;* these, however, have not continued beyond the period of taking away from those colonies necessary restraining regulations, and abolishing the sovereign controul of the mother-country.

Colonies may be thus classed:—those which are founded by means of emigration from the mother-country; such as have been planted in consequence of the cession of the natives; colonies which are the fruits of conquest; or, lastly, those which owe their origin to varied combinations of these several circumstances. It is of great impor-

* It is obvious that the author supposes a due proportion to be observed between the population at home and the colonies planted abroad. The case of Spain, where the mother-country has been exhausted and reduced to a state of imbecility by improvident and profuse colonization, affords a solecism in politics; and as the Spanish colonies draw no supplies from the mother-country, they may be deemed in every thing, but name, independent upon her.

tance to bear these distinctions in mind ; for they must ever be attended to in the granting of privileges, the prescribing of restrictions, and the framing of laws adapted to the peculiar cast, character, and circumstances of each. Dissimilar as they are in their very nature, one unvaried form of government cannot, with propriety, be applied to them all. Those indulgences and encouragements which are necessary to some of them may prove prejudicial to others : nor have they an equal claim on the parent state. Those persons who cannot mark those statistical differences which must necessarily determine their several constitutions, and the quantum of their immunities, have yet much to learn concerning the true principles of colonial legislation.

The progress of colonies in all the arts of civil society, as well as in gradual advances towards independence, is natural, and perhaps unavoidable ; particularly in those instances where the inhabitants retain their original language, and live under the same laws, observe the same customs, and have been trained up in a participation of

the same ideas of civil liberty which prevail in the mother-country. Colonies have their state of infancy and pupillage ; after a while, they attain maturity, imbibe notions of independence, and become uneasy under those restraints which guarded their infantile state. In this we may distinguish a marked similarity between the natural and the political world. After a certain period, those establishments begin to make attempts at procuring independence ; and fatal experience has proved, from what has already taken place in the western hemisphere, that these attempts are at last crowned with success. From the very commencement of jealousies and animosities, the parent state derives a diminishing benefit from her settlements, in exact proportion as they less require her aid, and give less employment to her manufacturers in furnishing the articles which the colonists consume.

Millions may have been expended, and heavy taxes willingly paid, by the mother-country in support of her colonies struggling for existence : but notwithstanding all this, and even the impartition of patronage, and

the necessary aids afforded to the commercial credit of the colonists in cases of emergency ; the whole has too often ended rather in promoting than impeding their ultimate independence, and has rendered nugatory all the measures hitherto prescribed by the most refined policy to render them, for as long a period as possible, instrumental to the welfare, and subsidiary to the prosperity, of the parent state.

These considerations, suggested by bitter experience, have been hitherto very little attended to in managing distant possessions. The general benefit of the colonies has been consulted as the primary, and almost the sole object ; but at last, when public expenditure and private exertion, lavishly combined, have rendered them independent, we have only to lament our unhappy mistakes.

Let any thinking man but advert to the sums laid out upon our American settlements, looking simply at the documents of yearly expenditure preserved in the tables recorded in the Annual Register ; let him reflect upon the wars in which we engaged for the sake of our colonies, particularly

when Lord Chatham undertook to conquer America in Germany ; let him look at the blood and treasure spent in expelling the French from Canada, which in 1759 was thought a most fortunate (as it surely was a glorious) achievement, though subsequent events have proved the fallacy of such an idea,—and he must necessarily see, if he do not wilfully shut his eyes, that all this liberality, and martial prowess, did but hasten the catastrophe of July 4, 1776, when the Thirteen Colonies declared themselves independent.

It may be deemed too late, when the Rubicon is passed, to deprecate impolicy of this sort, or to indulge in unavailing complaints. It will however serve to prevent a repetition of such distressful circumstances in after times, to point out this most important fact, *that by not adhering firmly to wholesome regulations, and proper restrictions, there can be but a small chance of prolonging that period during which colonies are of advantage to the mother-country.* Take away the restraints of sound policy, and a premature separation must necessarily be produced, extremely detrimental

to the latter, and leaving the former in a state hardly equal to the protection of their growing commerce, unable to repel aggression, and a prey to all the evils which invariably vex and harass a weak government. The experience of past ages will no doubt furnish many examples of a like description; and in consequence of our treading in the footsteps of those who before us have deviated from the path of true policy, a similar result must necessarily follow: and it will be found, that in the instance of colonies formed by emigration from the parent state, confidence has been reposed in them, concessions have been liberally made, and encouragements of every kind have been held out to them; till the colonists have taken advantage of the bounteous disposition of their fellow-subjects at home; and have ultimately used the strength which they have attained, to break asunder those links of grateful amity, which should have held them attached to the land of their fathers as firmly as chains of adamant. Authentic history proves, that from the era of the Grecian colonies planted in Asia Minor,

to the memorable event of the American revolution, the removal of restrictions has occasioned a lengthened series of expense, bloodshed, and vexation, till a final separation has taken place between a mother, foolishly fond, and her ungrateful offspring.

Whatever sentiments may be entertained concerning the equity or the policy of granting indulgences to colonies of this class; are we to assume it as a general maxim, that to colonized territories obtained by cession, similar privileges and benevolences are to be granted? Or at least, when conquest has added provinces or islands to the ancient dominion of existing states, ought not the entire frame of the government and the scale of commerce, devised for these new acquisitions, (unless otherwise settled by the terms of their surrender), to depend wholly upon the cultivation of those interests which may best promote the welfare and prosperity of the country by whose sword they have been gained, and to whose empire they are become appendages?

Conquests achieved in distant parts of the globe are but of questionable importance,

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and productive of small benefit to any country, compared with those colonies which owe their origin to emigration. The scale of refinement and civilisation may be as high in the reduced provinces, as in the victorious state. They may have advanced as far in the perfection of mechanical arts, as the nation which has subdued them ; they may equal the more powerful country in the richness of their natural productions ; they may even excel it in the variety, the delicacy, or the utility of their manufactures. It will therefore derive little or no advantage from the export trade with the acquired territories, and they may even rival their new mistress in supplying other nations with the necessities or the elegancies of life ; a competition which must be fraught with many dangers to the sovereign state, whose well-being it were absurd to place in any circumstances of hazard. This were only to conquer political ruin, and prematurely to accelerate statistical decay. That country must be ignorant of every principle which tends to cherish the prosperity, or secure the wealth of nations, that should thus foster destruction under the wings of victory.

The most obvious advantages springing from colonization, are derived from the interchange of such commodities as furnish employment to the population of the parent state. The commercial connexion will prove less and less advantageous to her, in proportion as she is rivalled by her colonies, and as they take off in a reduced ratio the produce and manufactures supplied by the mother-country.

From what has been said, it is perfectly reasonable, that all British settlers in colonies which have been formed through cession of territory or conquest, and the whole of their commercial concerns, should be rendered subservient to the interests and welfare of their native country, to whose laws they owe a sacred obedience, and whose supremacy they are bound to acknowledge and respect; nor can any thing absolve them from allegiance to their Sovereign, although it is apprehended that they too frequently persuade themselves that distance cancels duty.

In every case of colonization, whether by emigration, by cession, or by conquest, regulations adapted to every exigency

are indispensably necessary ; and these should never be suffered to grow obsolete, but, from time to time, be new-moulded, and unremittingly enforced, in proportion as the infant settlement rises in the scale of political importance ; in order to preserve unimpaired the authority of the parent and superior kingdom, and to secure to it all the beneficial results of well-organized colonial polity ; otherwise the most ruinous consequences may be expected, arising out of the very nature of things, and evidenced by the testimony of ages.

These restrictions, however deemed oppressive by colonists, if viewed in a true light, will be found perfectly reasonable, and every way consistent with the rules of equity. The colonists are in a great degree exonerated from the operation of those taxes levied on their fellow-subjects at home, for the general support and defence of the empire ; at the same time that they participate in the commercial advantages of the mother-country. These they will notwithstanding endeavour continually to appropriate to themselves. Demand after demand will be made, and every

concession will only stimulate fresh requisitions. In proportion, however, as they diminish the commercial prosperity of the parent state, the less equal will it be to sustain the fiscal burdens necessary to ensure national defence. Its sources of profit from abroad being cut off, it will not be able to support the expenses of the home establishment, and must of course dwindle into insignificance, or sink under its enemies. From these premises, this conclusion must unquestionably follow: That, to make the establishment, the maintenance, and the prosperity of colonial appendages, primary objects; to promote their interests, without keeping in view the relation in which they stand to the mother-country; and to give facility to their intercourse with foreign nations,—would be to adopt principles of government as repugnant to true policy as to common sense.

The advantages enjoyed by settlers are various and considerable: the market of the parent state is ever open to them; and through this medium, the marts of other nations with whom she is in amity. The colonists, as has been already observed,

escape the burden of those local taxes which are often severely felt by their fellow-subjects at home ; and so long as the settlers conduct their affairs on the basis of probity and honour, they will always have credit at their command, and enjoy the benefit of commercial preference, arising out of a natural partiality which must pervade all bosoms, far exceeding any sensations that can be felt for the most favoured foreign nations. Advantages such as these must present a full compensation for any restrictive regulations under which they may lie ; and it should always be remembered, that regulations of this sort must be instituted *ex necessitate rei* ; nor can it be too often or too seriously pressed, that a firm adherence to a restrictive policy alone can secure the allegiance of the colonists, and the advantages which they bring to the mother-country ; for surely it were outrageously absurd, and altogether unnatural, that the prosperity of the original nation should be sacrificed to the well-being of her scions grafted on a foreign stock.

These principles and deductions appearing too obviously founded in truth and

sound policy to be controverted by reflecting and considerate statesmen, it shall now be the author's business to apply them impartially to a case of prodigious and vital importance to Great Britain,—the *renewal of the East India Company's Charter*; in the pure hope that the research into the fundamental principles of colonial trade, and the extended view which has here been taken of the subject, (different as it is from that of the partisans of either side, and clear of all irritation), may be deemed, generally, as disinterested and unbiassed as it is meant to be; and that the author's real object will be discerned by all his readers, viz. *the paramount and lasting welfare of Great Britain.*

So much prejudice has been excited, and so much harm has arisen, by an improper application of terms, that a considerate mind will endeavour to divest itself of their influence, on the examination of any important question. Great hostility has been created against the East India Company, by applying to their concerns the term *monopoly*, in its most invidious sense,

viz. the securing to a few, by means of arbitrary restrictions, those advantages which it is presumed might, with public benefit, be enjoyed by many. But if it shall appear, that the benefits of the India trade may be as considerable, and as widely distributed, under the Company's Charter, as they would have been, had no exclusive right existed ; the privileges which it confers cannot be considered as injurious to the public. The advantages of oriental commerce have not been confined to the Proprietors of India Stock alone, but have been shared by the whole community ; and be it ever remembered, that if the commercial funds of the Company had not been dedicated to the maintenance of the Indian Empire, and the security and consolidation of our possessions in that quarter of the globe, there would have been nothing left, at this moment, to dispute about.

Let us not be the dupes of vulgar errors ; for on the subject of monopolies, it should be considered, that any trade whatever, must, to a certain extent, be monopolised ; for it

is just as impossible to preserve commercial as political equality. * Capital, superior information and intelligence, influence and connexions, possessed by a few merchants, will always prevent the advantages of any trade from being enjoyed by all who may be inclined to embark in it; and the more remote the country shall be with which that trade is carried on, the fewer will be the hands into which the profits must fall. It should also be recollected, that no persons can fully enjoy the profits of a trade, without the employment of an adequate capital, and the labour of considerable application. The mode of ensuring the beneficial returns of commerce, is the same in all cases, *simpliciter duntaxat et unum*, whether that commerce be open to essays of general speculation, or whether it be guarded by legal provisions. In the latter case, the means of obtaining a share in its proceeds are more precisely

* The disturbances in France commenced with the popular cry for *liberty of trade*; and let it be remembered, that they have ended in the most bloody war that has ever desolated the world; undertaken for the specific purpose of destroying *all commercial freedom*.

defined, and adventurers are less exposed to risk ; the public, however, are in no way sufferers.

Divesting ourselves, therefore, of all prejudice, the expediency of renewing the Charter of the East India Company will manifestly appear, by showing that the country could not derive more or greater advantages from an open trade with India, than it certainly may, under *proper regulations* of the present system. The question, in a national point of view, in which Parliament ought to consider it, is not, whether the out-ports will receive additional benefit by an open and unrestrained commerce with India?—but, whether the great interests of the country will be promoted ; and whether those advantages will be enjoyed, in a more extensive degree, by those individuals who compose the trading division of the community ?

The benefits which Great Britain derives from the trade with India are not solely to be estimated by the returns which pass into the treasury of the Company ; but by the employment, the remuneration, the profit, and advantages of those who are in any

way, immediately or indirectly, connected with it. The freighting of an outward-bound Indiaman puts trade in motion through the remotest districts of the United Kingdom. The *matériel* (if such a word may be used in this sense) of a fleet, the vessels and rigging, the stores, guns, ammunition, and provisions, are found at home; and with respect to cargoes, in addition to those parts of them which turn to a *profitable* account, the Company export large quantities of the produce and manufactures of this nation, on which, as merchants, they receive *no profit*, and in numerous instances suffer a loss. Will it therefore be contended, that from a trade of this sort no advantage accrues to the country, except that which flows into the coffers of the Company; when we consider that the thousands engaged in the manufacture of commodities, or concerned in the transit of merchandise, have obtained a profit, and that the King's Exchequer has received an accession of revenue directly, or by the operation of collateral taxes?—Can it be expected, therefore, (and it is a most serious consideration to the laborious

classes of the people of England), that any *private merchant* will conduct his business on this extended scale, and on this liberal principle? It may be urged that he will reduce the expence of freight, in order to enable him to secure a profit on his goods in the India market; but this can only be accomplished by his appropriating to himself a part of those profits enjoyed by a great number of persons now employed in the transit. Unless, therefore, the demand for British produce and manufactures shall be increased by an open trade, or an higher price shall be obtained for them in India than they fetch at present, which cannot be deemed very probable when there shall be such a competition of venders; we must assume it as a point demonstrated, that the export trade to India may afford full as great advantages under the management of the East India Company, as can possibly arise from an unrestrained communication. The supply of a distant country, like India, with British manufactures, is best to be accomplished by an uniform system, well digested, and steadily administered; and it is only to be effected

by a large company, or by the efforts of a few principal merchants, influenced by an intercommunity of sentiment, and uniting to furnish the necessary commodities, and to give regular employment to the manufacturers of this kingdom; who, on their part, aware of the stated calls for their goods at the proper seasons, and making their purchases at the best advantage, without the hurry and confusion incident to an uncertain sale, could enable such merchants as we have described, with no loss of profit to themselves, to carry on an export trade to India, at a cheaper rate, and with articles of a more uniform quality, than they possibly could, if left to the desultory and fluctuating exertions occasioned by the private (and not seldom clashing) speculations of individuals.

It is of great consequence that the views and projects of the merchants of any country, concerned in a specific trade, should be confided to those who are engaged in the same traffic. A just equipoise is thus maintained in the markets at home and abroad. In the East India Company,

this is perfectly understood, and is managed with admirable precision. The conquests recently made in the different islands of the Indian Sea, will provoke no ruinous paroxysm of wild adventure: very different from what so lately took place on the shores of the Atlantic! How many merchants fell sacrifices to the mania that prevailed in the commercial world on the taking of Buenos Ayres and MonteVi deo! Lord Valentia gives us a true picture of the wretched effects arising from the jealous competition of the Americans trading to Mocha. One or two ships having carried coffee to America, disposed of it there to very good advantage. This was whispered about, and the American merchants having no confidence in each other, privately fitted out a great number of vessels for Mocha, on the return of the season. To the surprise of the captains and supercargoes, ship after ship entered the harbour; Arabia was inundated with American commodities, and the price of coffee was so much enhanced by this most injudicious competition, that the market was totally

spoiled. Mischiefs like this cannot occur under the auspices of the East India Company; but how they can be prevented, in case the out-ports should be admitted into the trade, it will be for the favourers of innovation to demonstrate.

If the advantages already derived from India shall not be rendered more *considerable* by risking the experiment of an open trade, is it perfectly clear, or is it probable, that they will be more *widely diffused* amongst the inhabitants of Great Britain, than we find them to be at present? —Or, is it not rather to be expected that the principal benefits will be confined to a few merchants and their dependents; and thus a monopoly of a truly dangerous species will be established, instead of a trade limited by legal, and consequently known restrictions? * The benefits accruing from the India trade are not engrossed by a few;

* It should be remembered, that the measure proposed by his Majesty's Ministers does not go to destroy the principle of monopoly, although it will do away many of the advantages resulting from the present system; for the trade will be as much a monopoly in principle when confined to six ports, as when restricted to the port of London.

they are divided amongst many. To suppose that a limited number of those now engaged in the trade share the principal advantages amongst them, is a gross error. Of the numbers who embark in the present system, many reap profits extremely disproportionate to the capital they employ, and the exertions they make. The case is the same with the Proprietors ; the quantum of whose dividends has not been, nor can be, augmented beyond what it now is. The surplus would go to the state in the first instance ; but it has been absorbed by the expenses which have been incurred from the necessity of repelling aggression ; the taking up arms to maintain the internal peace of India (continually endangered or molested by the intrigues of the great enemy of British commerce with the native powers) ; and, lastly, by the necessity of expelling the French, and other nations under their influence, from the oriental islands, the ports of which, for so long a time, sent forth continual annoyance to the trade. But for the immense sums thus expended, in securing what are nothing less than *national* benefits, the debt which now oppresses the

Company would not have been incurred. With respect to the officers of the establishment either at home or abroad, it is notorious that many years must elapse before any of them can realise a moderate fortune; and it was correctly stated by the Edinburgh Reviewers, that the progress towards independence of those young men who go to India, is not so rapid as that of the same number who, with equal talents, remain at home. Of those engaged in the shipping concern, many of them receive no interest on their capital, and none more than a small one. The commanders and subordinate officers, a class of men of acknowledged talent, tried integrity, and great respectability in society, are justly entitled to consideration in these pages; but it is lamentable to think how few of them, considering their numbers, obtain the means of retiring from their laborious employments at that period of life which most requires, if not affluence, at least ease, repose, and a fair competency. Where then are we to look for the signs and tokens, the morbid symptoms of that bloated monopoly, which so frequently furnishes a sub-

ject for vulgar declamation or popular harangues? It must be observed, too, that every article used or exported by the Company is bought by *contract*, and that all its imports are disposed of by *public sale*; and being brought to one market, a great emporium is thus constituted for Indian goods; and although nothing should appear to be gained by the Indian trade, abstractedly considered, this measure secures a great demand for British manufactures, of vast importance to the country. And is this a system to break up, to demolish, and to throw into inextricable confusion, in the hope of making some fancied, some Utopian improvement? Is fact to give way to supposition? is reality to be bartered for hope? is theory to supersede experience? It is hard to say of what sort the waking dreams indulged in by the advocates of an open and unguarded trade may have been; but this is clear, that however limited the profits of those who employ the largest capitals in the affairs of the East India Company may be, the sources of general advantage (if advantage it may be deemed or styled) are as freely open to every indi-

vidual, as those of any trade whatsoever; India stock may be purchased by any one; the contracts are open to all who choose to send in proposals; the doors of the Company's sale-rooms are shut to none; and offices of responsibility or trust are attainable under the Company, as in every department of the active world, by the usual steps; by the assiduities and zeal of friendship, by the exercise of industry, by the display of talent and the proof of integrity. The word *monopoly*, in its odious and revolting sense, is altogether inapplicable to the system of commerce maintained by the Honourable East India Company.

If the country in general reaps advantages from the Indian trade under its present wise limitations;—unless it can previously be proved that superior benefits will result from an alteration of system, compensating the distress, and overwhelming confusion, that must inevitably attend the forcing of the trade into new channels, after it has flowed in its present bed with a fertilising stream for more than two centuries;—so tremendous a change ought not to be attempted, so hazardous an experi-

ment ought not to be tried. The Proprietors, and all who are connected with the Company, from the Chairman to the humblest labourer in the warehouses at home; from the Governor-General to the servant that supports his palanquin in India; are justified in the confidence which they repose in the collective wisdom of the Legislature, and the hope which they entertain that their interests will neither be sacrificed at the shrine of popularity; nor compromised in order to establish a preponderant interest in the out-ports; nor abandoned to the scramble of those who certainly do not compose a larger, or a more respectable, or a more trust-worthy part of the community than themselves, in their several classes.

That the East India Company should be allowed to possess territory gained by right of conquest, is a subject which has been often discussed. This, abstractedly considered, is a question for publicists to decide. There can be no doubt, however, that if the conquered provinces belong to the State, the Company has an equitable claim on the Empire for a reimbursement of the ex-

penses which have been incurred by adding to, or preserving and defending, her dominions. With regard to the demesnes which the Company holds in consequence of grants from the native princes, or purchases from the oriental possessors, it is clear that these princes, and others, had the right of ceding lands, and conferring authority to rule them, or of parting with territory or power for a valuable consideration ; and that if the terms on which these grants, purchases, or surrenders were made, cannot any longer be complied with by the Company,—the lands, and the prerogatives attached to them, ought to revert to the aboriginal proprietors, unless it appear that the Company are invested with power to make them over to the State for a just and fair equivalent. Such property, derived from the munificence of Sovereigns, has been deemed sacred in England ; and it were a libel on the Legislature to suspect that Parliament will invade it. The property of the East India Company will surely be as much respected as that of the meanest subjects of the King.

It may be proper, however, to look at

this part of the argument in another light. The Company possess invaluable territorial property in India, ceded in the way of negotiation, or granted in free gift, by the sovereign proprietors of the soil. Possessions of this nature are exactly of the same sort with those which in Europe arise out of the bounty of crowned heads to individuals; whether bestowed as rewards for services rendered, or encouragement to merit, or simply as marks of royal favour and princely liberality. If property of this nature is to be wrested out of the hands of the Company, for whom is it destined? Is it to be given to strangers? Is it to be restored to the representatives of the original granters? Or, lastly, is it to be confiscated for the use of the State? If the State is to seize it, then it will become us to advert to the principle on which this is to be perpetrated. Will the necessities of the State afford a sufficient apology for a strong measure like this? Then will many great landholders in the United Kingdom be placed in a perilous situation; for the principle is equally as applicable to multitudes of them at home, as to the Company, in its

remote possessions. The old maxim, *nulum tempus occurrit regi*, may be expected to revive : what is now deemed indefeasible property, may turn out to be held on the frail tenure of caprice ; the forest of Inglewood, and many old English parks, forests, and chases, bestowed by our ancient monarchs as the rewards of valour, the honourable requitals of political wisdom, or the tokens of affection, may be resumed at the pleasure of Administration. And be it ever remembered, that the princes of India have far more power over their domains, than any king of England possesses over the property of the Crown, in the limited monarchy which is the glory, and the boast, and the blessing of England.

With respect to revenue, which is admitted to be rather an affair of Government than of the Company, although it is equally clear that every body must feel an interest in the fair and just collection of legitimate duties, as every evasion of them is an injury to the advantages of the honourable merchant, and all must contribute to make up the deficiency ; let us ask

how, or in what manner, this branch of the public service can be better administered, can be made more productive, or performed at less expense, than at present? It is self-evident that frauds must be fewer, and the establishment of revenue officers on a smaller scale, when the trade is confined to one port, and to a single dock, than if it were scattered round the country. The walls which surround the East India Dock afford no less security against pilferers and plunderers, than against smugglers, and those who are masters of a thousand contrivances to defraud the revenue. Shall we look for greater security in the bays, creeks, and inlets which indent an extended line of coast on each side of our islands; many of them affording convenient landing-places in districts which are thinly inhabited? The size of the India ships now at once points out to the revenue-cutters those vessels, amongst a number, that require attention; but when vessels of only four hundred tons burthen, freighted with Indian produce, are floating along our coasts, what written instructions can possibly suggest

whence they come. In the bosom of the port of London, the greatest emporium in the world, where the principles of trade are so thoroughly understood, and where there are so many eyes to detect offenders, who can only expect safety in solitude and darkness, every possible method has been devised, and put in force, to place the revenue in such a situation as almost to bid defiance to the artifices of the most ingenious dishonesty. The erection of the East India dock, the publicity of the Commercial Road, and the covered caravans which convey goods from the docks to the Company's warehouses, have completed a system which has occupied the attention of Government, employed for many years in attempts to extinguish smuggling. Can it be consistent with common prudence, or can it meet with the approbation of that class of the King's Ministers charged with the care of the revenue, to abandon the securities which have been devised? And, surely, it will not be asserted that any system more lax, or less rigid, should be adopted; or that fewer precautions will ensure what is due to the Customs or the Excise.

Now, let us ask, are there docks at the out-ports on the principle of those at Black-wall, prepared to receive the commerce of India within their inclosure? If they do not yet exist, let the projectors of the unlimited system calculate the sums it will require, and the labour it will demand, and the time it will take to form them. Let them next consider how they shall frame and establish departments within those docks, filled with experienced functionaries, the guardians of public and private property, attending to the most minute concerns either of revenue or trade ; and it will be for those who manage the affairs of the Exchequer to consider the armies of Custom-House and Excise Officers which must be marshalled in the out-ports ; and for those senators who watch over the public expenditure, to estimate the expenses which must be incurred by the folly of doing that in many places, at great risk, and probably very inadequately, which at present is done so perfectly, and so economically, in one. It will also afford matter of serious reflection for those members of Parliament, in either House, who look with a jealous eye to the

extension of ministerial influence ; to weigh well, whether the proposed alteration will not increase that preponderancy of power, in one of the three estates of the realm ; which, in their judgment, has already too great a sway in directing the affairs of the nation. This is not urged in the spirit of hostility to the present Ministers ; far from it. The author respects them much ; but he knows human nature too well, not to be alarmed at the increase of power which, in the event of adopting the new plan of conducting the Indian trade, must needs be thrown into hands prepared to grasp and wield, to their own advantage, an accession of strength. To all these sources of influence must be added that arising out of the patronage annexed to the fleets of revenue-cutters, and other vessels, filled with officers of different descriptions, which must cruise without intermission along our coasts, in order to prevent, or check, if it be possible, the attempts of those concerned in contraband enterprises. Out of all this arises an argument of considerable importance :—If in the memorable contest which took place in 1783, between the country at large,

(which at that time espoused the cause of the India Company), and the then Administration, the patronage of Leadenhall Street was not allowed, on constitutional grounds, to be transferred to the disposal of the King's Ministers, nor yet of Parliament itself; is it to be expected that the fancied, certainly not the real, interests of a few of the out-ports, will induce the country to connive at the weight of patronage which the new experiment on commerce will cast into the ministerial scale? Mr. Rose published, with laudable pride, an account of the reduction of revenue-officers effected by Mr. Pitt. Could the disembodied spirit of Mr. Pitt take cognizance of the projected re-appointment, and the prodigious increase of those people, (always odious in a free state), for no other reason except the hope of appeasing some unquiet persons who have involved themselves in temporary difficulties in their own immediate lines of commerce; would he not (together with his great colleague, Lord Melville, a consummate master of every circumstance connected with the India Company) reprobate the conduct of his successors; who

nevertheless have often professed to tread in his steps, and adhere to his counsels? When the Company's Charter was renewed under the controul of those two great statesmen, the trade was continued in the same channels in which they found it, after the most minute investigation of the measure in all its points, and a degree of serious consideration, far surpassing any that has taken place on the present occasion. This assertion may be made with truth; and it is hoped that it will be received, in a certain quarter, with candour. Now, we would ask, whether any, and what, mighty alterations have taken place in the condition or the conduct of the Company, or in the relation in which it stands to the country, which can justify an innovation so portentous in itself, and so replete with hazard to the community? And, appealing to the honourable sense of justice, which pervades the hearts of Britons, we would further ask, whether the Company, after having fought the nation's battles in every quarter of the East, expelled the enemy from the Continent, and driven him from the islands of India, and

having on this account incurred a debt amounting to twenty millions sterling; have not a fair claim on the Legislature to continue to them the possession of their ancient privileges?

Although it has been urged, in popular reasoning, that the East India Company must always have been aware of the limited duration of their chartered rights; and that, therefore, whatever plans were adopted, or expenses were risked, still they should have contemplated the termination of their exclusive trade at the end of twenty-one years from the date of their Charter: Yet after charters had been confided to them for two hundred years; after the decisive opinion of the most celebrated statesmen had been repeatedly expressed, that the Company afforded the most legitimate and safe channel of commercial communication with India; could any suspicion arise, that a renewal of the Charter, and a continuation of the Company's privileges, could take the form of a question, or become a matter of doubt? Had the East India Company acted on such narrow motives, or had it been swayed

by such contracted counsels, when summoned to prepare for warlike operations; or had the Company, at that moment, sat down to a cold-blooded calculation of profit and loss depending on the brief duration of the present Charter, instead of putting their troops and ships in motion, and their stores and treasures in requisition, they would have merited contempt, and deserved abandonment. Had they considered, in that exigency, their own interests as separated, or separable, from the interests of the British Empire, they had earned disgrace, and might expect to be paid with reprobation. On the contrary, with a patriot ardour, scarcely equalled, certainly not excelled by any class of their fellow-subjects, however opulent, however dignified; they dedicated all the energies of their commercial capital to the great national object of preserving the British Empire in the East: and with a liberal spirit, the reverse of monopoly, they conceded to the merchants of this country the general navigation of the Eastern seas;*

* See the late concessions of trading as far as to the me-

excepting only those districts in which strangers might trench on certain peculiar branches of the Company's immediate commerce with the peninsula and China ; with a view of preventing that impolitic intrusion into the interior of the country, which might endanger the civil authority vested in the Company. On a principle of public spirit, and actuated by a sense of public duty, they gave every possible facility to the measures of Government, and they paid the navy and army appropriated to the defence of India ; a circumstance in which the Company stand alone ; for there is no other instance on record, in which a military expedition, undertaken by a nation, has been supported and paid by a commercial body of its liege subjects. Nor is this all ; for it must not be forgotten that the Company, at these eventful periods, and at all times, furnished tonnage for stores, troops, and naval equipments, not only without limit, but without charge. They have also given ships of the line to the state, and have provided a route from the Persian Gulf, and, south of the equator, to any extent eastward.

vided and maintained three regiments for the preservation of the metropolis, and the defence of this country, if required. When the Gazettes which recorded the glorious result of the Company's exertions, were hardly dry from the press; will posterity believe, or will our contemporaries credit, that then, even then, plans were maturing, petitions were preparing, and interest was making, to wrest out of the Company's hands a trade which has enabled them to render such important services to the common-weal; or that the King's Ministers should entertain an idea of granting a participation in the Company's privileges to those who, without contributing a farthing to them, have a share, with the nation at large, in all the beneficial consequences arising from the burdens so nobly borne by the Company?

From the most impartial view, therefore, of this great subject; from the most dispassionate consideration of which so interesting a question will admit; from a diligent perusal of what has been urged to the Legislature and the public, through the medium of the press; after many con-

versations with the well-informed, and after much patient attention to public debate—this most reasonable conclusion may fairly be drawn, that any violent alteration of the present system, or any material trespass upon it, will assuredly occasion, either immediately or ultimately, the most serious injuries and eventful consequences which can befall any country. They will be felt throughout the Empire; and probably in the following order,—London will be the first sufferer; the speculators in the out-ports will next sink in the vortex of ruin; and, what is a most tremendous consideration, the whole of India, (from the mouths of the Indus to the confines of Aracan, from Thibet to Cape Comorin), with all its islands and dependencies, will exhibit a horrible scene of insubordination, confusion, and revolt; for however trivial the beginning may appear, the seeds of all this mischief will be sown by the intrusion of speculative adventurers. Wherever many are ruled or restrained by a few, the rawest student in the science of politics will inform us, that all authority is founded on *opinion*. The writer of these sheets would not will-

ingly alarm the public mind further than is necessary to rouse it to a due examination of the Indian controversy ; but he thinks it his duty to state, that already, owing to the interposition of a power superior to that residing for such a length of time in the East India Company, (an innovation which has been felt and reasoned upon in India), the native princes and states are at a pause ; and are beginning to doubt the stability of the present Government, and to question the permanency of existing treaties. Staggered in their confidence by the deference paid to the King's authority,* and the King's servants (for this has not escaped their penetration) ; observing that some of the highest offices, the Commander-in-Chief, the Judges and Admirals,

* It is not meant to be denied that the King's authority is, and must be, supreme ; and that his Majesty's appointment of the great officers employed in the Government of India, is legal, having the sanction of the Parliament, and the force of a law ; but, so far as opinion weighs with the millions of the Indian population, it had been a wise and politic measure, if the Legislature thought it necessary to fix such appointments in the Crown, that they should still take place through the ostensible medium of the Company ; for it must ever be deplored that the co-existence of two authorities should have been erected in the teeth of Indian prepossessions.

are all appointed by the British Government; and that since the commencement of this change, and through the instrumentality of these personages, the whole peninsula has been subjugated, and a constant succession of wars has taken place, contrary to the policy of a commercial Company, influenced ever by the dictates of prudence and economy; remarking that all the political affairs of their country are guided by a power in England superior to that of the Company—the native princes can only look upon the Court of Directors as the Dewan of the English Government; and may naturally be induced to expect that the assumption of the Company's authority into other hands, will be followed by that of their territory, and by the cancelling of every treaty subsisting between them and the Company, at the pleasure of the higher power.

The transfer of a native army of 150,000 men will not be very easily effected. The attempt will be hazardous, and may occasion such a convulsion as will shake our Indian possessions to their centre;—considering the interest which every prince

in the country must naturally feel in prompting a struggle, and promoting discord. And this is another matter which demands most serious attention.

When we consider the great importance attaching on the connexion subsisting between this country and India, and how much the peace, and prosperity, and manufacturing interest, of the British Empire, depend upon it; no minor motive of policy ought to induce us to risk an alteration in the form of the Indian Government, or the mode of conducting the commerce carried on between the mother-country and her Oriental colonies. No topic applying to this subject can be irrelevant to the question.—Let us therefore advert to another circumstance which may endanger the tranquillity of the two countries. Should unlimited access to the ports of India be allowed to adventurers, attracted thither from many quarters by the hope of enriching themselves; it appears not very difficult to predict the consequences. The Company's Government, shorn, as it has been, of authority, and diminished in power, could exercise no very efficient

controul over the shoals of people who will find their way to India. Having sailed from the out-ports without licence from the Company, it is not to be supposed that they would yield obedience to the regulations prescribed by the Court of Directors, or acknowledge any jurisdiction in the accredited officers of the Company, established in the different presidencies of India. They would traverse the country in all directions, rivals of each other, and all of them rivalling the Company. The course of trade would be thrown into confusion; the markets would contend with each other, to their mutual destruction; jealousies would arise between district and district, inflamed by the artifices of a set of people whose sole object must be to accumulate fortunes with rapidity; whose views can only be temporary and selfish; who can have no interest in the permanence of Indian prosperity; and upon whom, in a short space of time, (succeeded, as they would be, by fresh adventurers), no orders of the Court of Directors, no resolutions of the Board of Controul, nor any vote of Parliament itself, would have any effect.

We should consider here the distance of space intervening between the seat of Government at home, and the scene of operation chosen by these eager votaries of wealth ; and we must also take into the account the magnitude of India and its immense population, compared with those of the British islands.

If any alteration should take place in the existing laws under which the affairs of India are administered, enough has been urged already, to prove that such alteration should be of a nature calculated to render that country more dependent upon Britain ; or, if possible, more useful to her. The changes petitioned for, must be, of all others, the most dangerous : the loss of our American colonies should have taught us wisdom ; and the explosion occasioned by the French Revolution, produced by the endeavour of theorists, professedly to better the condition of the country, and indeed that of the human race generally, should make us very cautious how we venture upon any measure which may raise a fermentation amongst the myriads of India. That some modifications of the trade, to a certain

degree, may be proper, will not be denied ; but, as to the propriety of adopting the sweeping changes proposed, since the wisest and greatest statesmen have already deprecated them, it may be asked, whom shall we account the best judges of the question as it stands at present—the ill-informed petitioners for ruin at the out-ports ; his Majesty's present Ministers ; or the India Directors, whose peculiar interests would not be injured by the proposed changes ; for their patronage and emoluments will not be touched, and none of them are large holders of India Stock. The Directors have for many years contemplated and managed the concerns of India, and are in possession of a mass of experience which has been accumulating ever since the year 1600, the forty-third of Queen Elizabeth, when the first Charter of the Company was granted. We should remember, too, that the opinion of the Directors is founded on the judgment of those great statesmen, Messrs. Pitt, Dundas, and Fox ; and is supported by that of the merchants of London, who trade to all parts of the globe, and who must be deemed, what they are in fact,

the most accomplished traders, and best informed commercial characters, in the world:

Independently of commerce, let even the enemies of this country declare, what a degree of political importance arises to Britain from her possessions in the East, under all the disadvantages, as some people might be disposed to say, of the existing monopoly. The weight and consequence which India (triumphant as the Company has been of late in that quarter of the world) gives to Britain in the balance of power, are so great that they ought not to be endangered by adopting the schemes of interested projectors. The dismemberment of the Anglo-Indian Empire would be a most awful, if not a fatal event; and that government which paves the way leading to such a catastrophe, incurs most serious and deep responsibility.

It has been held forth that the proposed alteration in the Indian system, will tend to promote the general welfare. It is presumed, that what is contained in these pages, has shewn such a supposition to be a mere pretext, set up *ad captandum*, to

impose upon many for the ideal advantage of a few. It is incumbent upon the partisans of change to substantiate their assertions by proof. Parliament has hitherto, and with incalculable benefit to the public, proceeded upon solid grounds. The Acts of Parliament arise out of a basis of *evidence*; the clamours of the out-ports will not avail at the bar of the House of Commons, or above-stairs in a committee-room. There, declamation passes for nothing; and there it is, or in the Upper Chamber of Parliament and its apartments, under the sagacious presidency of the Chancellor of Great Britain, or that of Lord Walsingham (from whose indefatigable labours and consummate knowledge of business, the public has derived innumerable advantages); there it is, that Lord Buckinghamshire will learn “whether the nation is without an alternative” respecting the government and the commerce of India; whether the welfare of the country will be secured by laying open the Peninsula to the speculations of adventurers; whether the tranquillity of the factories and other settlements will be maintained amidst the shock of contending

interests ; and whether Parliament will not determine it to be inexpedient, impolitic, and unwise, to disturb the Company in the possession which it yet holds, and the degree of authority which it is yet permitted to retain in India ?

That the British colonies in other parts of the world, in North America, for instance, and the West Indies, are open to all classes of the King's subjects engaged in trade, is most true, and is readily admitted. But these colonies are, and have been always, under the immediate jurisdiction of the Crown. The King appoints their governors, and all the officers, civil and military ; the constituted authorities hold direct communication with the sovereign power at home ; they administer justice with vigour, they meet every emergency with promptitude, and can at will enforce obedience to their lawful commands. Compared with the remoteness of India, those colonies are in a manner before our doors, and under the eyes of Government, with which they have at all times a speedy intercourse. The authority exercised over Europeans throughout the extended dis-

tricts of India, is in comparison but shadowy and unsubstantial. The people of England are not aware of this. The governing power in India is *sui generis*; for we may recognise there—first, The authority of the native princes; secondly, that of the Company, erected upon grants from those princes, or treaties with them, or delegated, by virtue of the Charter, from the King; and, thirdly, the imperial sovereignty of the Crown of Great Britain. All these are curiously blended together, and form a singular species of polity, sanctioned, partly by law, and partly by prescription, and supported by opinion. With regard to Europeans, however, all residents in India enter into covenants with the Company, finding security for their good conduct; and contempt of the Company's authority can only be punished by sending the offending party from the country. But, during the continuance of peace, he will have abundant opportunity of sheltering himself under a neutral flag; or, at any rate, may occasion, as has been already the case, tedious and expensive investigations in our courts of law.

It has been observed, that in consequence of the wise provisions of the Navigation-Act, the intercourse of foreign nations with our western colonies is restrained; whereas, on the contrary, with regard to India, it is said, and probably truly, that *British capital* has often been employed in trading with India, under the cover of *foreign flags*. But it is to be feared, that in the event of conceding the prayer of their petitions to the out-ports, after the disappointed adventurers shall have parted with the sanguine hopes which at present cause their bosoms to pant; after their golden dreams shall have ended in positive and actual losses—the privileges with which they will be invested may, at no great distance of time, present that anomalous prodigy in the trading world, the converse of the last mentioned case, *foreign capital embarked under British flags*. Thus Englishmen will degenerate into carriers of Indian produce from their own settlements to their own ports, for the benefit of foreigners; much in the way that the Spanish galleons bring the precious metals of Peru and Potosi to Cadiz; not on the account of Spanish, but British and other

merchants. *Sic vos, non vobis, fertis aratra, boves, &c.*

The Government in India having availed itself of the treasure shipped by the Company at home for commercial purposes, and having appropriated it to the liquidation of the expenses attending war-like operations, and having retained the formidable vessels belonging to the Company, and employed them in the defence of India; a question naturally arises out of the probability that the same measures may be resorted to again, on a similar emergency. In this event, when the Company's ships shall be fitted out for the general service of the public, is the trade of the out-ports to continue without a check, whilst the Company is to stand the brunt of battle; and their ships, built for commercial purposes, shall be freighted with British thunder? The Company's patriotism is well known to the country; but will the country assign *honour* to the India Company merely, whilst their rivals in the out-ports shall be in the quiet possession of the whole commerce? The dividends of India Stock must probably suffer diminu-

tion, whilst the Company covers itself with glory. Will the country allow it to sit under the barren and deleterious shade of the laurels it has earned ; whilst a tide of wealth sets into the out-ports, with its currents quickened by the Company's exertion, to its own assured loss, and their sole gain ? The merchants at the out-ports are no doubt honourable men ; and as their ships will not be applicable to the service of the nation, on the recurrence of such difficulties, it is to be hoped that they will not object to compensate the Company for the treasure with which they may furnish the state, and the vessels they may place at its disposal.

In fact, the whole measure is replete with difficulties, and pregnant with many evils. It does not seem possible to maintain any intercourse with India, beneficial to Great Britain, except through the medium of the East India Company.

However, it is not intended in these pages to assert, or to insist, that the Company has never erred, or has done every thing, numerically, which the country had a right to expect. A friend, as the author avowedly is, to the first trading company

in the world, he cannot but deplore that truth and candour oblige him to record some of the vacillations in council and in system which they have betrayed. In Mr. Pitt's and Lord Melville's time, repeated complaints were made to those eminent characters, that the East India Company did not give due encouragement to the export of British goods, or the import of raw materials for our manufacturers; and that the remittance of private fortunes from India had not that facility which ought to have been afforded. Hence, in the year 1793, the supply of a given quantity of tonnage was stipulated for with the Company, and enjoined by the Act of Parliament which was then passed; and a specific rate was agreed upon for freight on a peace-transit. In case the Company's tonnage in India should eventually prove inadequate to the demands upon it, the governments there were empowered to grant licences to country-ships, which were allowed by an Act of Parliament to import produce during the continuance of the war, and for the space of eighteen months subsequent to the termination of hostilities.

The complaints which had been then preferred were thus remedied, yet in such a way as to preserve the rights of the Company inviolate; the imports and exports being confined to the port of London, and every thing passing under the eye of the Company. London, and the Company's warehouses, afforded, as they had done for the space of two hundred years, a depot for all the produce of India; and as a matter productive of mutual benefit to every one concerned, the goods were all to be sold by the Company at the usual sales. The introduction of India shipping, thus legalized, afforded an opportunity, eagerly embraced by the residents in India, to send their goods home in their own vessels; and although the ostensible reason for this choice was the high war-freight of the Company's shipping, yet there is abundant proof on record,* that other motives existed in their minds, and helped to sway them to the preference given. The ships, on their return to India, were laden by the several houses to which they had been

* See "A Review of the Shipping System of the East India Company," published 1798.

consigned ; but with a very small proportion of the manufactures of this country ; as may be evinced by the statement of a cargo in the Third Report of the Court of Directors in the year 1801. Thus a monopoly was established by the residents in India, embracing both the transit and trade. The consequence of this indulgence, and the exclusion of British merchants and British shipping, produced a most serious controversy between his Majesty's Government and the East India Company ; which ended in an engagement, on the part of the Company, to furnish a description of shipping for the sole purpose of private trade ; and permission was given to the India ship-owners to supply a proportion, subject to the same conditions as those furnished by British owners ; of which permission they have never availed themselves. These vessels were to be so completely equipped as to surpass any private ships whatever ; and the Court, in order to give every facility to the merchants, engaged that the ships should never be detained more than three months unemployed after delivery of their cargo from India, if competent to

proceed : they further undertook to furnish the dead-weight ; and in case the merchants should not lade the ships, they engaged to do it on their own account ; and, in consequence, some ships were taken up at 12*l.* per ton, and none higher than 15*l.* peace-freight, out and home. This arrangement, if fully acted on, was one of those liberal concessions which will ever do honour to the East India Company ; but it is to be regretted that the Company did not follow up and act upon this principle in a more ample degree, by furnishing freight to all descriptions of persons requiring it ; by giving notice of the quantity of tonnage provided, and confining this species of shipping, as was originally planned, to direct voyages without detention ; and by continuing this cheap system of employing extra ships, instead of garbling and tampering with so excellent a plan, by the appropriation of those ships to other purposes, and taking up temporary vessels at higher rates of freight. Had they persevered in the intended system, every cause of dissatisfaction would have been suppressed. The employment of ships of 400

tons burthen, equipped as they are at the out-ports, can never furnish an adequate transit for cargoes from such a distant market as India. Shipping of this sort may suit the American nation, which has never till lately encountered a maritime war. Convoys cannot be afforded, as is the case with fleets bound to the West Indies; and although the smaller ships of the out-ports may now safely navigate the Indian seas, through the exertions of the Company, at whose expense they have been cleared of hostile flags, yet still the risk of homeward-bound vessels continues very great.

The exclusion of all the subjects of this realm from the Eastern hemisphere, (excepting the immediate servants of the Company, the licenced residents, and his Majesty's forces), is a constituent part of the tenure by which the Charter is held; and it is highly expedient that it should be so. As the Proprietors, by continued grants and repeated Charters, have been so singularly favoured in their enterprises, it was natural to expect that the Court of Directors, and their servants in India,

should be extremely solicitous to promote, amongst the natives of that country, the interests of British commerce, and the consumption of home-manufactures. It was reasonable to hope that the agents of the Company would do their utmost to discourage any rivalry with British commodities; that the export from hence to India, of British produce, and British goods, would have suffered no diminution through any improvident encouragement of Oriental productions, either natural or manufactured; that a predilection for their native land, and the force of custom, would have secured, with all Europeans in our Indian settlements, a marked preference for every article exported from Britain; in a word, that British and Indian commodities could never have come in competition with each other in the East, but that either the feelings of nationality, or of patriotism, would have preserved to the former every possible commercial advantage. It is but too truly to be apprehended that the reverse of all this is the fact; and that throughout India, colonized as it is by the natives of these

islands, Oriental productions have been encouraged, the manufactures of Britain copied and rivalled, her commercial exports diminished, and the interests of the Indian settlements have been chiefly considered, with a marked preference to those of the mother country. Lord Chatham averred that America should not be allowed to make a hob-nail whilst England could supply her. However difficult the accomplishment of this might be in the case of America, the principle is a wise one ; and is surely applicable to India, where every person taught to imitate an article of European manufacture, learns his craft to the detriment of a British artisan.

It is now asserted, and with truth, that India stands in need of few articles which this country can supply. This cessation of demand for home-productions in the Indian market, is the lamentable result of the culpable infatuation which has promoted, in the districts of Hindostan, the manufacturing arts of Europe. This evil, so destructive of the prosperity of Great Britain, has increased with the enlargement of our settlements ; but what will be the

consequence of an open trade? The out-ports, and even London itself, will in course of time send out multitudes of adventurers; extensive manufactories will be established in every part of India; the British looms, forges, and potteries, will presently suffer under the effects of this mistaken system; our Oriental colonies will feel themselves independent on Britain; our exportation of the produce of British labour will suffer vast diminution; and money will probably become the only medium of commerce from this country—bullion our only export. The cotton mills of Lancashire, Cheshire, Yorkshire, and Scotland, will experience the ill effects of the projected communication with India. At all events, it is to be hoped, that in the new Charter some prudential regulations will be introduced to secure the wakeful attention of the Court of Directors to the manufacturing interests of *this country*.

It is by no means a matter of difficulty to substantiate these observations by evidence. Indeed, proof has become hardly necessary; for it is notorious that India has made rapid advances in the produc-

tion of European manufactures, and the adoption of British improvements in mechanics. In many articles they have already established a rivalry with us; and, it is possible, (nay, if an open trade should be conceded, it is *probable*), that they will be able to supply themselves with those goods which we yet are able to export. India is not without copper, iron, lead, and other metals; and what must astonish every one who has the least smattering of *the policy of commerce*, iron works are about to be established in India under the sanction of Government; and samples of steel have been transmitted home, equal to any made in Britain. Thus will some of the most essential articles of British manufacture, in a short time, produce no commercial benefits to our country, so far as India is concerned, through the competency of the natives to fabricate them, instructed by the mistaken zeal of Englishmen, and supported by the East India Company, and by Government itself.

It behoves the public to look narrowly into the probable consequences of the projected innovations. The Court of Direc-

tors, themselves, have not secured to their country all the advantages that she might have enjoyed from the wholesome restrictions which they had it in their power to lay upon trade; and they have connived at, if not encouraged, attempts in manufactures, from which we could only look for contingent and remote benefits, whilst the detriment occasioned by them is direct and immediate.

Were a list of the articles formerly exported to India made out, and compared with the goods which that country now takes from us, we should be utterly astonished at the various manufactures of which she no longer stands in need;—Asia, at this day, preparing for her own use, and the consumption of many of our countrymen, resident in her territories, what formerly was supplied by the skill and industry of Europe. The very stores and equipment of their shipping, canvas, cordage, &c. have attained their present excellence from the inquiries, investigations, experiments, and improvements, suggested by the East India Company and their servants. But while the naval department

of Government at home (actuated by shortsighted and false principles of economy) has overlooked the claims of this country to the employment of her manufacturers ; is it to be expected, that the residents in the peninsula of India will be swayed by any motives to a different policy in favour of Great Britain ? Unwise as we are in thus devising, for temporary purposes, the means of our own abasement, if not ruin, at some future day ; let us look at the crisis to which such mismanagement must needs reduce our native country. It must continue to sink lower and lower, till at length India, once the cause of British prosperity, will become the instrument of its degradation.

We have, as yet, only contemplated manufactures of a minor class ;—it is now necessary to call the attention of the public to others not simply commercial, but such as have been always considered of the first importance to the well-being, and even the existence of Great Britain as an independent power. It is hardly possible to conceive a measure more impolitic, or more pregnant with detriment and danger to this country,

than *the building of ships in India* on the scale now adopted. This novel practice is encouraged by every possible influence. It is a plan, the evils of which are already perceptibly felt; and if it be not restrained by some specific regulations, it must superinduce the most ruinous consequences. It visits with distress not only those opulent men who (relying on the maintenance of the principles on which the Navigation-Act is founded), have formed and kept up large establishments; but multitudes of industrious men, forming the numerous class of shipwrights and artificers, trained to their business, and depending for subsistence on the maritime exertions of Great Britain. On the river Thames, in the immediate vicinity of the metropolis, there are no less than six of these great establishments, competent to the building not only vessels suited to the trade of the East India Company, but line of battle ships. These dock-yards, in the space of a few years, have supplied fifty sail of the line; whilst the King's yards have been appropriated to giving the navy those necessary repairs which are constantly and inevitably requi-

site in time of war. The furnishing employment to about five thousand men, heretofore engaged in the dock-yards on the Thames, has already become a matter of such urgency, that several new frigates have been put on the stocks by Government, with a view of enabling these industrious and valuable men to support themselves and families. The immediate cause of all this misery, which may be regarded but "as the beginning of sorrows," is the strange policy of building Indiamen at Bengal, and other places in the East. Thus another branch of manufacture, and that of supreme importance, is slipping out of our hands. Are people yet, at this hour of the day, to learn that labour is wealth? Let us look for a moment at the bearing of this argument on the conduct of the East India Company. The Company itself enjoys, by the favour of this nation, an exclusive privilege of trading to India ;— now is it not a matter to be deplored, that the Company should employ the natives of India in building their ships, to the actual injury and positive loss of this nation, from which they

received their Charter. Mistaken as the Company have been in this particular, it is not very difficult to divine what will take place, if an unrestrained commerce shall be permitted: if British capital shall be carried to India by British speculators, we may expect a vast increase of dock-yards in that country, and a proportional increase of detriment to the artificers of Britain.

If it be supposed that India-built ships may be hired upon more favourable terms to the Company than vessels constructed at home: this is not the case; although the repairs of ships built with teak cannot cost a tithe of the charges incurred by repairing those built in this country.

Disputes on the subject of freight have subsisted for thirty years past, and have occasioned many misunderstandings, and much ill-will. The favourite ideas concerning India-built vessels, and other ideas, about to be noticed, have inspired unpleasant jealousies on one side, and have prompted many complaints on the other. That the freight paid to British ships will

not produce an interest of 5*l.* per cent. on the capital embarked, has been made evident by the calculations of the Company's own officers. The eagerness to obtain commands, however, has produced, under the shew of free and open competition, a ruinous speculation. Commands may be said to be actually purchased, under the colour of reduced freight. There is a circumstance which is decidedly in favour of the ships built in India (and equally destructive to the interests of the British artificer, or British owner), and this is, that the India-built vessels have the advantage of an entire freight home, before a contract for general freight is made. All these things make against the mother country, and are contrary to the principles of wise colonial policy. It is not, however, in the nature of things, that errors of this magnitude can subsist much longer, without producing a convulsion. These manifold trespasses on British rights, will lead to consequences, which it is clearly the duty of the Company and Government seriously to weigh, with all the attention which the subject demands. In contending for the

renewal of an exclusive Charter, and the continuance of the India trade to the port of London, it may be reasonably asked of the Company, if they are to sacrifice none of their prejudices to the interests of this country? If they are to divest themselves of the power with which the nation entrusts them, by surrendering to the Oriental residents such advantages as serve to ripen their independence, and to make them rivals to Great Britain; it becomes a duty to contend for our country and our countrymen against Asiatic interlopers, although the changes in the Indian system petitioned for, those blind suggestions of sanguine ignorance, cannot be too strongly deprecated. Impartiality and equity compel the author to remonstrate with the Company, and to demand for England her just share in the advantages resulting from the Indian trade. That India and Britain should reciprocate in these benefits, is right and proper; but it is neither fair nor politic that the "reciprocity should be all on one side."

Are the merchants' yards to be shut up, or reduced in their establishments, to suit

the erroneous policy of the India Company ; when they have been admitted by the Court of Directors to be so competent to assist Government under all the exigencies of the state ? Or can the British landholder hear, without emotions of apprehension and repugnance, that from the abundance of teak in the forests of India, his timber is to suffer a reduction in value ? In the first place, the shipwrights in India will defraud our own artificers of their birthright ;—employment, and the profits arising from the combination of labour and skill ; and, secondly, the raw material of the Oriental colonies will be brought in competition with that which is of home growth. Thus both in manufacture and produce the colonies will injure the mother country. This inversion of every principle of sound policy must operate to the discouragement of the growth of timber. Can it be expected that noblemen and gentlemen will pay so much attention as heretofore to the inclosing and the preservation of their woods ? This may produce, in the end, that very scarcity of timber, which the patrons of India ship-

building, and teak importation, would persuade us already exists ; and this scarcity may prove fatal to Great Britain at a period when we shall no longer have the option of felling teak at our own pleasure. It is not true that a scarcity exists at present in any degree to the extent stated ; but the alarm has had the good effect of giving a stimulus to the public mind, and has excited fresh attention to the cultivation of timber. The arguments of Mr. Evelyn, formerly Treasurer of Greenwich Hospital (whose excellent work, entitled *Sylva*, or a Discourse on Forest Trees, first appeared in 1664), and the excellent arrangements of Mr. Pepys,* his great contemporary, Secretary to the Admiralty in the reigns of Charles II. and James II. have not failed of their effect. From that time, planting has become more and more general, and the growth of timber, both for private and national use, has been promoted in the woods of individuals, and in the King's forests. Let us not close our eyes to facts. Fifty sail of the line have

* Pepys died in 1703, and Evelyn in 1706.

been launched within three or four years, and at this moment there are 90,000 loads of timber in the King's yards, and as much more contracted for ; and there is an abundance in those of the merchants. And is it for this asserted deficiency of timber, that the natives of India are to wrest employment out of the hands of British shipwrights, and that Indian capital is to have a preference to that of Great Britain? Surely some plan may be devised to avert the anticipated evil ; and since a participation in those benefits that belong to British subjects, is the point contested at present between the Company and the out-ports, a paramount duty falls upon the Legislature to provide that the interests of this country should be secured to its own people ; and this as well for the reasons already given, as for some others, which it remains to state.

When we look at Java, our late acquisition, an island abounding with teak, it is clear that ships may be built there in any quantity. Under the direction of a foreman-shipwright and smith, with the help

of the artificers and labourers of the country, one of the finest ships in the Company's service, of 1200 tons burthen, was built in its vicinity, at Penang. Similar efforts will doubtless be made at an island affording greater facilities, unless some restrictions be devised, and some protecting regulations in favour of British ships and seamen take place, under the authority of the Legislature. In the marine yard at Bombay, there is not a single European workman ; and if the skill of the native artificers may be estimated by the specimen which they have given us in the *Minden*, of 74 guns, it is very evident that they cannot fail to attain celebrity, encouraged and applauded as they have been by very high characters, and allowed to supersede the shipwrights of Great Britain, as though our artificers had become ignorant of the science to which they were bred ; or as though it were more beneficial to this country to pay Indian workmen, than to throw business into the hands of our own people. A procedure this, which militates against every principle of policy and patriotism.

Not many years ago, when Indiamen

had completed their number of voyages in the Company's employments, they were frequently sold for the country service; being then nearly the largest vessels in that trade. The case is now altered. Those noble structures, which were once accounted the boast of Europe, have been reared throughout India. Without that grave deliberation, or that reference to future consequences, which an innovation so momentous obviously demanded; dockyards and arsenals have been established there, by those who are resident in that country, through the permission of the East India Company; and a race of men, remarkable for the want of mental energy and physical strength, have been taught to excel in a branch of mechanics which they never could have carried to such a pitch of perfection, without the impolitic tuition of a class of people who should have reserved to Europeans an art which has so powerfully contributed to the subjugation of the Asiatic provinces. At present, individual ships are built there; but whole fleets may be furnished if required, and hereafter may be disposed of to those

with whom Britons may one day have to contend for their maritime rights, and the empire of the sea.

How far such measures can be reconciled with those which prudence would dictate; how far it may be thought proper to continue, or to limit them—will be, it is hoped, the subjects of the most attentive consideration; and will not fall to the decision of those whose predilections in favour of Indian exertion and talent, have excited and encouraged such surprising and such alarming efforts. Least of all, should the discussion of these points be left to those governments in India which, in decided opposition to British interests, have indiscreetly afforded the means of bringing us to a crisis so replete with danger.

The question of building ships in India is a measure which may furnish employment for the most vigorous intellects of our first statesmen, who should coolly view it in all its bearings, and contemplate its ultimate issue. It is not yet too late to attend to it. It will yet admit of some wholesome modifications.

At all events, our naval resources here should not suffer diminution, nor should the means of rendering them useful to the state be crippled. They are of vital importance in all their ramifications. None of them should be suffered to fall into decay. They may all be put in requisition on some great emergency. This is the era of political changes. We must be prepared against all hostile attempts. It will be too late to set about renewing our establishments at the moment when our entire force may be called into action.

Having noticed the rivalry that subsists between this country and India in those objects of commerce which may be deemed British manufactures; and the unnatural preference given to those goods now fabricated in India, originally of British invention, and brought to their present perfection by British labour and ingenuity; it may not be amiss to attempt the solution of so strange a circumstance. It is certainly the duty of the governing power at home to encourage the colonists abroad; but this must never be done to the prejudice of the native subjects of any country. But if

Government has been inattentive to this principle, can it be expected that the residents in the Peninsula and its dependencies should much regard them? Many of those persons have quitted the British islands in early life; they have formed new habits, and are become partial to the people amongst whom they live; they are proud of the ingenuity manifested by the natives, and regard it as a proof of their own efficiency, and the fruit of their own patronage; they are not uninfluenced by certain motives of economy; and at last they become rivals of their fellow-subjects, and cultivate interests ultimately detrimental to the well-being, and destructive of the mercantile prosperity of the land of their nativity. On the return of such persons to Great Britain, can we wonder that they retain those habits which have thus generated a second nature? Can we wonder, that in the capacity of opulent individuals, or, eventually, Directors of the India Company, or members of the Legislature, they should praise the adroitness of the natives of India in the fabrication of manufactures, the competency of the

country and its inhabitants to produce them, and the cheapness of labour in our Oriental provinces. This discussion, operating in a certain way on the human mind, may be deemed metaphysical and impertinent to the subject of these pages; but it is presumed that it has a practical bearing on the whole of the argument. The more of truth it may discover, the more should it put the executive government on its guard against the probable consequences of these predilections, and impel our statesmen to adopt such measures as may secure to this country all the advantages derivable from the employment of its artisans in their respective branches of manual labour. It is granted that gentlemen who have long resided in India must have acquired much valuable general information; of this it is most proper that the country should avail itself: but it must ever take care to fence round its manufacturing interests with such barriers as may resist the efforts of those, who, without any criminal intention, and swayed merely by habitual partialities, may be induced to place them in circumstances of hazard.

If ships are to be built throughout India, and are to be entitled to British registers, they will be numerous beyond all expectation; the artificers of this country must either emigrate or starve; and the revenue will suffer most serious diminution. By way of elucidating this argument, let us examine the single article of hemp. This, in its raw state, pays a duty of 9*l.* per ton; but it is obvious that in consequence of the improvement and consumption of Indian canvas and cordage, whilst our home-manufacturers are injured, the duties must be lessened, and the deficiency must be made up by other taxes; at the same time, it is obvious that the revenue must suffer an additional loss in the amount of those indirect taxes paid by the labourers in all they consume. The same reasoning applies to every other case of manufactures encouraged in the colonies, of whatsoever nature they may be.

One might be induced to cherish a hope, that facts so self-evident as these could not be overlooked by our statesmen; but experience too plainly proves the contrary;

as is most evident from what has been already pointed out. The naval department has but too industriously seconded the endeavours of the Indian residents to supply those articles manufactured in the colonies, which ought to have been furnished by Great Britain:—dangerous and most erroneous system, to be deplored by all true patriots; and to be amended, curbed, or altered without loss of time, if it be not grown too inveterate to be meddled with. If the evils attending it cannot be removed, at least care should be taken that they may not be aggravated or increased. It is easier, however, to prevent mischiefs of this kind, than to suppress them.

The war has been urged as a plea for the adoption of measures confessedly impolitic; and it is held out that they are but of a temporary nature. Arrangements of this kind, however, are commonly more permanent than the generality suppose, or some people will admit. When trade has taken a determinate course, it is difficult to shut up those channels which have been formed. But the existence of war furnishes a strong argument against the inno-

vations complained of: for how is it possible that those who are obliged to contribute to its support, directly or indirectly, can enter into competition with the colonists, who may follow all sorts of trades *ad libitum*, without being burthened by an hundredth part of those imposts which the inhabitants of the mother-country are bound to pay. It has been computed that they are obliged to part with half their income to the state. Dr. Price estimated their contributions at 15s. in the pound; and however aggravated his calculation once appeared, subsequent events have proved it to be correct. When we take the increase of population into the account; the impolicy of those measures which, by depriving thousands of employment, render it impossible for them to pay taxes, is most evident; and one cannot but be astonished at the infatuation which occasions a loss of 75*l.* per cent. in the payments of the bulk of the laborious classes to the Exchequer. It may be granted that certain articles of Indian manufacture may be purchased at a lower rate than the higher price of labour, occasioned by the

taxes which Government receives, will permit this country to charge; but it is to be considered that by throwing multitudes out of employment, the country is so far from gaining by all this, that it is demonstrably a loser: and at the same time it ought to be remembered, that the money lost to the mother-country is gained by the colonies, who are thus in a more alarming degree enabled to rival that state whose support should be the joint object of all its subjects at home and abroad.

It is also matter worthy of consideration, that in every beneficial undertaking in this country, Government becomes, as it were, a partner without risk, sharing in the proportion of 10% per cent. on the profits; whence an immense sum accrues to the revenue;—still further increased, when the accumulation of money descends from the original merchant to his representatives, direct, collateral, or more remote. The amount of the legacy-duty is prodigiously great. But before this final distribution of acquired property takes place, we must form an estimate of the sums resulting to the state from the legal securities required

for the use of large portions of this money, in the form of bonds, leases, and agreements of various sorts, which are all legalized and rendered obligatory by stamps of various sorts, which pay a duty *ad valorem*. Can such substantial benefits as these be given up without due consideration? Will the revenue be increased by rashly transferring the employment of our manufactories to the natives of India?

If the object be economy; and we are merely to look at the primary cost of manufactured articles; let us pursue this argument a little farther, and let us see to what conclusions it will lead us. If it be right that India is to supply us with shipping at a cheap rate; by the same rule Russia may furnish us with canvas, cordage, leather, and soap; Germany may send us linens; Italy and France may fill our markets with wrought silks; and Spain, instead of supplying us with wool, may have the wisdom to put its looms in motion, and send us broad-cloths. We know from sad experience the perfection to which France has brought her woollen manufactures, and the brilliance and excellence of

her dyes; and we have already suffered from her exertions in that traffic which was once called the Staple of England, by means of which she shut us out from that mine of wealth—the Levant and Turkey trade. If it be right to import manufactured articles of prime importance from India, it must be equally so to import them from the countries here enumerated, and other nations on the continent of Europe. If cheapness is to be counted the first object, we can freight foreign vessels with foreign goods at a lower rate than we can lade British bottoms; and if so, what will become of the nursery for our seamen? All those great points now at issue between us and the Scourge of the civilized world must be given up; the object of the present war must be conceded to our unrelenting enemy; the continental system of Bonaparte, as far as we are concerned, must be assumed for good policy; the sun of British prosperity must set for ever; our wooden walls must rot in our ports; and we shall soon become so poor as to require no importation of any sort, and so sunk in an utter prostration of national energy, as

to furnish no exports whatever. It cannot surely be necessary to add a syllable more on this part of the argument.

However attached any man may be to the interests of the East India Company, however zealous in support of their independence; however he may advocate the renewal of their Charter, and the security of their ancient immunities and privileges: it must be his bounden duty to protest against the prevailing errors of the times, which cannot fail, if persisted in, to endanger the prosperity of the Company, and to lead to the disorganization of those colonies which have been the envy of other nations, and the source of immense advantage to Great Britain.

Respecting the operation of those causes which may lead to the eventual independence of our Indian colonies, it may be permitted to add a few words. The prospect of returning to their native land, after having realized a competency abroad, has always induced the residents in India to look homeward with affection, and to respect the stability of that country's prosperity which is to be their resting place

after the fatigues of active life. To keep up in the minds of their servants an affectionate feeling towards Britain, was long an object of the wise policy pursued by the Company. This cement is now dissolved; this tie is now broken. The Company has been obliged to reduce the emoluments of its servants, and administer its affairs on a more contracted, not to call it a parsimonious scale. The urgency of affairs, which has induced the Company to adopt these measures, has been unquestionably great; but it must ever be deplored, that any temporary pressure should have caused them to narrow their remunerations to such a degree, as to hazard a disunion of interest between the parent state and her Indian colonies. The late minister for India always relied upon the strong bond of affection which the hope of returning home maintained between the colonists and their native land. May India never become to England what South America is to Spain! The ancient liberality and enlarged policy, observed by the Government of India, are at an end! The impoverished state of the Indian

finances made some retrenchment necessary; but the civil servants of the Company have undergone such privations as have lowered their consequence and authority in the estimation of the natives. They have even incurred debts which reduce them to a state of dependency on those who ought to look up to them for protection. The servants of the Company must consequently grow lukewarm in their affection for Britain. The residents feel themselves almost expatriated. Their number, which is perhaps already too great, must certainly increase, if the flood-gates of the out-ports shall be opened; this will only tend the more to lessen the legitimate opportunities of realizing fortunes; home will be less and less thought of, and every inducement to separate the colonies from the mother country will act with the greater force.

Thus the economy so urgently pressed in this country, and carried rigidly into effect in Asia, had produced most distressing effects. It has created a sensation of disaffection and estrangement, which it will be very difficult to remove.

The general principles of colonization have been laid down, and their bearing on our Indian policy examined. A case has been made out, claiming the consideration of Parliament, which, it is presumed, will secure to the Proprietors of East India Stock a renewal of their Charter, with certain modifications. The errors of the Court of Directors have been noted, it is hoped, without asperity ; and the deviation from the wise system established in 1802, for the cheap transit of goods to and from India, has been explained. The incalculable injury sustained by the revenue, and the British artificers and manufacturers, by employing the natives of Hindostan, and the unrestrained introduction of Indian shipping, together with the probable consequences of this most dangerous measure, has been clearly set forth.—It is therefore with confidence that the author looks to the united wisdom of the Legislature for such enactments as will *secure* the government of India on sound colonial principles, and preserve the advantages derived from the present system ;—such as will give to the British merchant and manufacturer every

facility (compatible with higher advantages) in the transit of goods to and from India, and the remittance of private fortunes, by the *permanent* establishment of a class of ships on the principles laid down in 1802; and, at the same time, will protect the interests of the British ship-owner, manufacturer, and artisan, and provide for the consequent prosperity of the country, by such duties on the Indian shipping and manufactures, as are equivalent to the taxes, direct or indirect which affect the same manufactures in this country.

The French East India Company once partook of the commercial advantages derivable from their settlements in the Peninsula. The laying open their trade occasioned first the ruin of the Company, and was afterward followed by that of the private adventurers who sought, on plausible grounds, an admission to their exclusive privileges. The British East India Company have now gained possession of the factories once held by their ancient enemies, and have likewise driven from the East every competitor for the trade of Hindostan. May no delusive schemes

of wild speculation place our acquisitions in jeopardy ! May the events of past times, and the misfortunes of other nations, make us wise ere it be too late ! Nothing is so dangerous as to try experiments on states. Let us know when we are well off, and let us be admonished by the victim of empiricism, who, though dead, speaks most sensibly from the tomb :

“ I was well ;
I would be better ;
I took physic ;
And here I lie.”

THE END.

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Considerations on colonial policy, with relation to the renewal of the
East India Company's charter

London 1813

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